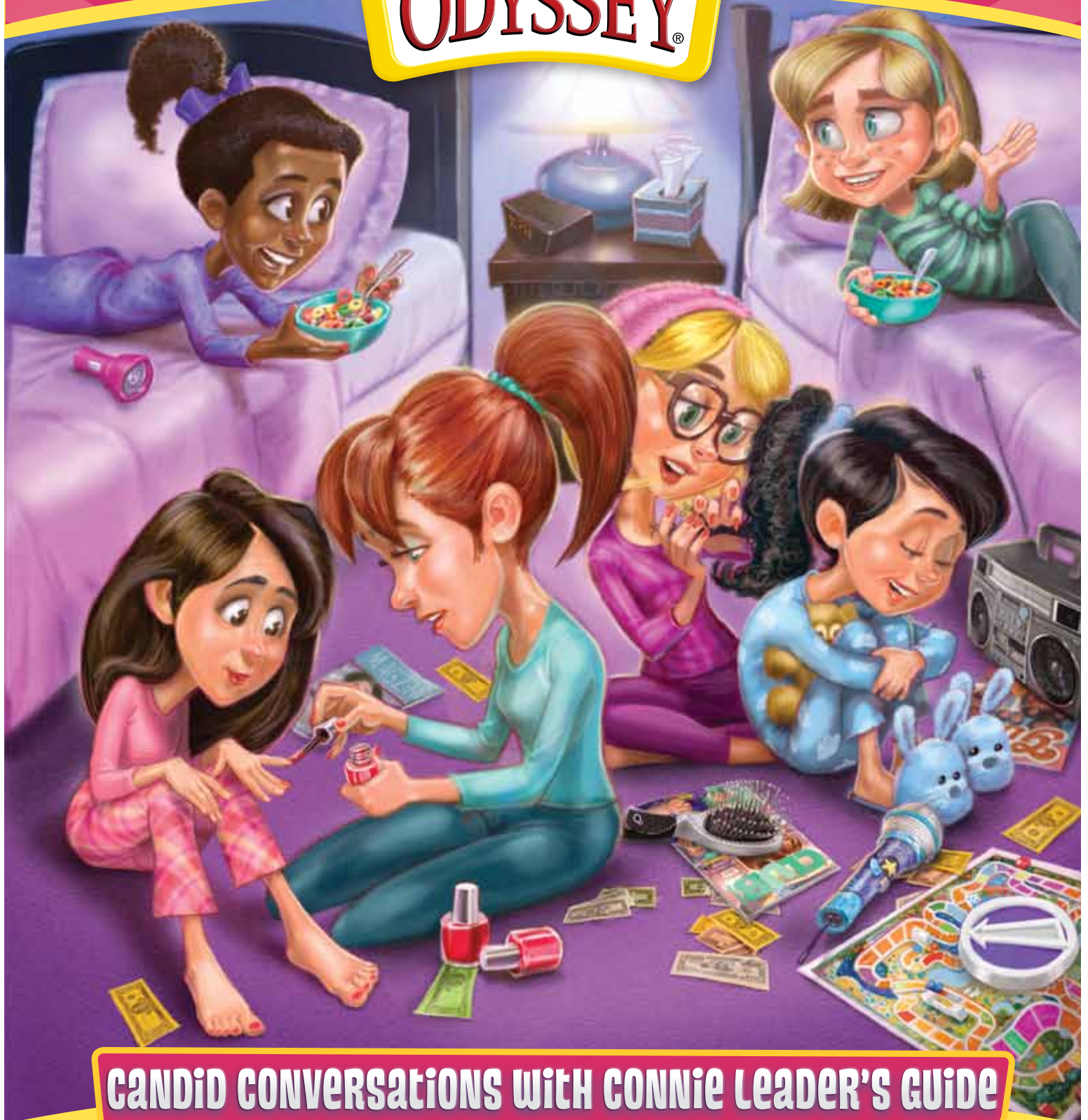


FOCUS ON THE FAMILY PRESENTS

Adventures in **ODYSSEY**



CANDID CONVERSATIONS WITH CONNIE LEADER'S GUIDE

Activities, Discussion Questions, and Prayer Prompts for Small Groups

Leader's Guide

by

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with

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Candid Conversations with Connie, vol. 1

Leader's Guide

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Introduction

Ribbons, bows, pink tulle, and fancy dresses! Oh My!

These were the thoughts that jumped into my mind when I knew my husband and I were expecting a girl!

Our little bundle of joy quickly became that doll-like beauty at our house until one day our preschooler said no to the dress! From then on, she had a tomboy-like attitude, complete with skinned up knees and jeans until about age nine. Then the roller coaster ride of puberty began. The hormonal twists and turns have given me back a dress-wearing teenage daughter, who now spends more time in the bathroom than I do! However, the greatest joy in my parenting journey has been seeing Katie develop into a loving, God-honoring young woman who puts Christ at the center of her life.

God began to give me a passion to look outside my family and speak into the lives of girls about five years ago so that they know they are Custom Made by God and truly loved by Him! I felt inspired to teach girls about being a “salt shaker” in a dying world and teaching them basic life skills such as manners and modesty. Five annual sleepovers of eight to ninety girls and countless moments later, I have loved watching girls come to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior and grow with grace and beauty from the inside out.

It was my honor to create the first draft of the outline for the Connie book series and provide activity ideas for you as a parent, teacher, or leader. I am in awe of the great talent and heart for girls given to Kathy Buchanan (writer) and Marianne Hering (editor) as they worked diligently to make these concepts come alive in the best “Connie” way ever!

I pray that the sweet girl(s) in your life will be blessed as you invest your heart and time into them. You may not see the return now amidst rolling eyes or sassy comebacks, but those seeds of truth will blossom into fruit beyond compare . . . one day. Feel free to use this material as a Bible study, slumber party discussion guide, or a starter conversation tool. Don't hesitate to write us at connie@whitsend.org. We'd love to hear stories about how this resource has helped you or see pictures of the girls you are serving.

In honor of my beautiful daughter and the smiling faces I see when I close my eyes and think of my girls' group at Vista Grande Baptist Church called “Custom-Made Girls” . . . may more girls know Jesus as Savior and grow in Him. I love and cherish the gift to be a part of your lives.

For such a time as this,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christi". The script is cursive and elegant, with a large initial 'C'.

Christi

Psalm 139:14

CHAPTER 1

You Are Not a Can Opener (But God Still Thinks You're Great)

Estimated time: 30–40 Minutes

Got extra time? See the appendix for more activity options.

Opening Activity

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week's lesson will open with a craft activity. Each girl will create a personalized soup-can label. The purpose of this craft is to show each girl how God created her and made her into the beautiful and unique person she is today. The participants will be asked to keep the soup can to serve as a reminder of God's love.

Gather

- Optional: Before the meeting takes place, ask each participant to bring in a small picture of herself.
- 1 standard-size soup can (Campbell's single-serving cans)
- One piece of pre-cut construction paper 4.5-by-6 or so inches. (It's best to measure.)
- Markers and/or pens

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1. Make a sample of the craft ahead of time to show the girls as an example.
2. Ask each girl to paste a photo of herself or draw a picture of herself on the precut construction paper. Encourage the girls to make the design like a logo or a brand. Suggest they draw a border around the photo, for example.
3. Ask each girl to write out a list of her special ingredients. For example, each girl could include a list of her talents, hobbies, or personality strengths.
4. At the bottom of the precut label, ask each girl to write the copyright symbol, the year she was born, and the following Bible verse adaptation as a mock copyright line: © 2002 Fearfully and wonderfully made by God (Psalm 139:14).

Discussion Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week's discussion stresses that each girl is precious and beautiful to God. God's high opinion of each girl should be more valuable than anything her peers say or think about her. This is a crucial lesson to emphasize because most teen girls pick up on damaging messages from the media and feel they are not pretty enough, smart enough, or worthy enough to be loved.

1. What did you think or feel when you read that you are God's poem?
2. What is one thing about yourself that you really like?
3. In chapter 1, Connie tells about a time when she wanted to be like Trixie Greenwald. Have you ever tried to be like someone else?
4. How does God's high opinion of you affect the way you think about yourself?
5. What's one thing you can do to remind yourself of what God thinks about you?

Prayer Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

Ask each girl to share prayer requests, either verbally or on paper. Then lead the group in prayer for each of the requests. If a girl doesn't want to pray out loud, that's okay; don't press her. If the prayer request was submitted privately, then be sure to pray with that girl one on one. End by praying that each girl will recognize the wonderful way God created her and that each girl will allow that truth to build her faith and self-confidence.

Optional: Assign each girl a prayer partner for the week. Ask each girl to pray for the other's requests. Change the prayer partners every week so that the girls get the opportunity to partner with different members of the group.

CHAPTER 2

Why Cake Sometimes Tastes Disgusting

(Recognizing Your Hidden Talents)

Estimated time: 30–40 Minutes

E Got extra time? See the appendix for more activity options.

Opening Activity

Time allotted: 10 minutes

The purpose of this cooperative relay is to highlight the different abilities of each student and show how she can work with others for a common goal. There will be three different stations, each with a different kind of challenge. One of the stations is mental (memory), one is physical (tossing a ball into a basket), and one is creative (sketching).

Gather

- 16 index cards (8 pairs) to form 2 sets of the matching-game cards.
- 2 tennis balls
- 2 equal-size baskets or trashcans large enough for the tennis ball to land in, but not too big that the task is easy

- several note cards, 3 by 5 inch
- blank white sheets of paper for each girl, at least 8.5 x 11, larger if available
- several pencils
- blue painter's masking tape or some other material to make a non-permanent starting line
- optional: prizes for the girls on the winning team

Go!

1. *Ahead of time:* For the matching game, write the following words or phrases onto index cards. The parentheses show the matches—state capital cities, having to do with eighty, Paul was bitten by a snake, Micah is in the Old Testament: (Sacramento, Indianapolis); (LXXX, octogenarian); (Snake bite, Paul); (Micah, Old Testament).
2. *Ahead of time:* For the creative challenge, have ready index cards with Pictionary-type words written on them. Keep them all at the same level of difficulty so that one team doesn't have an advantage. Here are some suggestions: canoe, feather, toaster, mousetrap, checkerboard, steering wheel, earring, daisy.
3. Split the girls into two even teams.
4. Explain the stations.
 - a. The mental station is a matching game with eight different cards with four matching pairs. The girl doing this station must match all the pairs before heading back to the line.
 - b. The physical station is a tossing game. The goal is to get the tennis ball into a basket or trashcan. The girl doing this station must toss a ball into a basket three times. The basket has been placed about 10 feet away. If she misses, she must chase down the ball and go back to the line. Spend some time setting this up and marking the throw line. (It shouldn't be too easy or too difficult.)
 - c. The creative station is a drawing game. This girl needs to read a phrase on a card and then draw that concept onto a large sheet of paper. The girl can head back to the start line after a member of her team guesses what the concept is based on her drawing. (This station should be near the start line so the team members can see the drawing.)
5. Allow each girl to choose which station she would like to do for the relay. (If all the girls want to do the same station, that's fine!)
6. Have each team line up, single file, at the start line. Instruct the girls to go one by one, complete the station, and touch the start line so the next girl can go.
7. The team that has every member complete her task first, wins.

Discussion Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

The focus of this week's discussion is on the different strengths and talents each student has. Some girls might have come into the study genuinely believing that they are not really good at anything. These girls need the most encouragement. Stress that God has gifted everyone, just in different ways.

1. What do you really enjoy doing?
2. What is one of your talents?
3. Do you ever get concerned about the things you can't do?
4. What can you do to improve your performance in the things you love to do?
5. How can you use your gifts to bring glory to God?

Prayer Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

Go around the group and take prayer requests from each girl. This can be done by saying the request out loud to the group or by having the girl submit the prayer in a note to the leader. Then lead the group in prayer over each of the requests. Next, end with a prayer that each girl will recognize how God has blessed her with amazing and unique gifts. Pray that each girl will discover God's plan for her life and have the faith to live it. If the prayer request was submitted privately, then be sure to pray for that with that girl one on one.

Optional: Allow time to manage the prayer-partner plan outlined in chapter 1.

CHAPTER 3

Once Upon a Time

(Making Sense of Your Life Story)

Estimated time: 30–40 Minutes

E Got extra time? See the appendix for more activity options.

Opening Activity

Time allotted: 10 minutes

Gather

- 1 simple jigsaw puzzle that can be done in less than 10 minutes

Go!

1. *To be done in advance:* On the back of each puzzle piece, write examples of life events, both positive and negative. Some examples are winning a game, failing a test, making a new friend, moving, getting bullied, going on vacation, fighting with siblings, getting a gift, having an embarrassing moment, transferring to a new school, or losing a pet.

2. Lay out the pieces on a table with the writing faceup.
3. Let the girls read all the pieces and then ask the girls to categorize the events as positive or negative. (Some events may be seen as both. For example, moving could be positive if a girl liked her new school. Moving could also be negative if a girl had to leave close friends behind.)
3. Flip the pieces over and challenge the girls to put the puzzle together. (If the puzzle is simple enough, don't let the girls use the puzzle box lid as a guide.)
4. Talk to the girls about how everything that happens to them forms their complete story. Without both the good and the bad events, they don't have a full story. They are the people they are today because of their experiences. Compare that to a puzzle. Without all the pieces, there's not a full picture. God can use the bad events in their life for their ultimate good (Romans 8:28). Stress to the girls that God does not cause the bad things to happen, but that He is always seeking the best for His children. Sometimes bad things just happen, but everything that happens makes up their complete experience.

Discussion Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

The focus of this week's discussion is on the life of Joseph. Stress that even though Joseph had bad times that he did not give up hope in God.

1. What did Joseph do that earned him the respect of Potiphar, the jailer, and Pharaoh?
2. Why do you think Joseph remained faithful to God even when bad things were happening to him?
3. How did God use everything Joseph experienced for good?
4. Can you think of a time when things looked bad, but God used that situation for good in your life?
5. How has the Lord directed your life so far?

Prayer Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

During prayer time this week, point out how God is always in control of the girls' situation and that God can use even the bad events in their life to create something beautiful. Pray with and for the girls that they will see God at work in their life as He is writing their story.

Optional: Allow time to manage the prayer-partner plan outlined in chapter 1.

CHAPTER 4

Shaved Cats Are Important

(How We Get to Know God)

Estimated time: 30–40 Minutes

E Got extra time? See the appendix for more activity options.

Opening Activity

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week's activity is a scavenger hunt that highlights the different attributes of God. The purpose is to teach the girls about God's character and the many different roles He plays in their life. It will help them see how He is many different things at once, but still the same God.

Gather

- Slips of paper that have one line (not a whole verse) of the Lord's Prayer on it. Number the slips in order. The Lord's Prayer is in Matthew 6:9–13.

Here's the NIV version with the line breaks marked by a slash:

9 “This is how you should pray. / “ ‘Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored. / 10 May your kingdom come. / May what you want to happen be done / on earth as it is done in heaven. / 11 Give us today our daily bread. / 12 Forgive us our sins, / just as we also have forgiven those who sin against us. / 13 Keep us from falling into sin when we are tempted. / Save us from the evil one.’ ”

- Sticky Notes with God’s attributes and scripture references. (For that list, see below.)

- 8 different objects, below are some ideas

- A heart shaped object—God’s love (1 John 4:10)

- A dumbbell or some other exercise-related equipment—God’s Power (Jeremiah 32:17)

- A food item of some kind—God the Provider—(Genesis 22:9–14)

- A toy stethoscope, or some medical-related object like a thermometer—God the Healer (Exodus 15:22–26)

- Glasses or a textbook—God the Wise (Proverbs 3:19–20)

- A stuffed animal or a blanket—God the Comforter (2 Corinthians 1:3–4)

- A gavel or some object representing law—God the Just (Psalm 75:1–7)

- An olive branch or a picture/representation of a dove—God’s Peace (Judges 6:16–24)

Go!

1. To set up this activity, hide several different objects around the meeting room that represent different aspects of God’s character.
2. Put a sticky note listing the attribute and a Bible verse reference about it on each object.
3. Once all the objects have been found, ask each girl to read the note on the object(s) she found.

Discussion Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week’s discussion is focused on the importance of spending time with God. Stress to the girls that they need to make time for prayer and Bible study if they want to get to know Him.

1. Why is it important to spend time with God?
2. What do you think it means to fall in love with God?
3. How have you seen God work in your life or the lives of people around you?
4. What makes it difficult for you to spend time with God?
5. How do you like to do your devotions?
6. What is one thing you can do to help you know God better?



Prayer Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This is a special prayer time since a good portion of this week's lesson is about prayer. There is an activity attached to this week's prayer time.

1. Give each girl a slip of paper that has a line of the Lord's Prayer on it. Number each slip in order so that the girls know when to read.
2. Ask each girl to read her slip at the appropriate time.
3. After reading the prayer, ask the girls to paraphrase Jesus' model prayer. Also ask them what they think the different parts of the prayer mean.
4. After this activity is over, take prayer requests and pray together like the other weeks. Be sure to pray that each girl will take the time to talk to God every day. Pray that she will discover how wonderful God is and will learn to trust Him with everything in her life.

Optional: Continue allowing time to manage the prayer-partner plan outlined in chapter 1.

CHAPTER 5

We Don't Need Oil Changes

(But We Do Need to Stay Healthy)

Estimated time: 30–40 Minutes

E Got extra time? See the appendix for more activity options.

Opening Activity

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week the activity is a craft that will remind the girls to take care of their body's needs. Each girl will decorate her own pillowcase that will remind her how important it is to rest.

Gather

- one plain white standard pillowcase for each girl
- several fabric markers (a set of 8 to 10 of a good brand will be \$4 to \$6)
- a list of verses about honoring God by taking care of their bodies.

—1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (ESV): “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within

you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

—1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV): “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

—Romans 12:1–2 (ESV): “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

—1 Corinthians 6:13 (NASB): “Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.”

—Philippians 3:20–21 (NIV): “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”

Go!

1. Have each girl draw on the pillowcase with fabric markers. Encourage the girls to decorate it in a way that will remind them to live a healthy lifestyle.
2. Have ready the list of verses that the girls will choose from to write on their pillowcase.

Discussion Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week's discussion is about honoring God by taking care of your body. Make sure the girls understand that God created them and calls them beautiful. God calls each girl “precious,” regardless of what they look like or what physical abilities they have. However, they are still to be good stewards of what God has given to them.

1. What do you think the phrase that your body is a “temple” of the Holy Spirit means?
2. Why do you think God wants you to take care of your body?
3. How can your attitude affect your health?
4. What is your favorite way to exercise and why?
5. What is one thing you can do to take better care of your body this week?

Prayer Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week there is an activity for prayer time. Take a prayer walk with the girls to incorporate exercise and prayer. If possible take the walk outside. Encourage the girls to pray out loud and thank God for their blessings. Pray that the girls would glorify God with their bodies by taking care of them and respecting them.

Optional: Allow time to manage the prayer-partner plan outlined in chapter 1.

CHAPTER 6

Even Car Crashes Get Attention

(Clothes, Trends, and a Little
Thing Called Modesty)

Estimated time: 30–40 Minutes

Got an extra 90 minutes and can take a field trip? See the appendix for more activity options.

Opening Activity

Time allotted: 10 minutes

The purpose of this activity is to show girls that what they wear on the outside is not as important as what is on the inside. It is based on Colossians 3:12 (NIV), “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

Gather

- Get a simple paper doll activity book. Make sure you have enough dolls for each girl to have one.
- Get enough accessories and pieces for each girl to have five items to put on her doll.

Goal

1. Label each type of clothing item with one of the following words: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, or patience. For example: A hat labeled compassion, a shirt labeled kindness, pants labeled gentleness, shoes labeled humility, and a bag labeled patience.
2. Read Colossians 3:12 (see above) and then ask the girls to dress their dolls.
3. Ask each girl to write Colossians 3:12 on the back of the doll.

Discussion Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week's discussion focuses on the way the girls dress and view fashion trends. Explain that what they wear (and how they wear it) matters to God. Encourage them to not overvalue the importance of how they look. Their worth lies on the inside rather than on the outside. However, girls should also do their best to represent themselves well to the world by dressing modestly and with care.

1. Why do you think people want to dress like everyone else?
2. Have you ever changed what you wear based on what others said was "cool"?
3. Why should you care about your appearance?
4. When can attention be a bad thing?
5. What does God say about your appearance? Why?

Prayer Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week pray that the girls would remember that God cares more about her character than how she looks on the outside. Stress to the girls that wanting to dress well is not wrong, but it should not become more important than growing in their faith. Refer back to Colossians 3:12 about clothing themselves with virtue to reinforce this point.

Optional: Allow time to manage the prayer-partner plan outlined in chapter 1.

CHAPTER 7

No, You're Not Crazy

(Managing Your Emotions)

Estimated time: 30–40 Minutes

E Got extra time? See the appendix for more activity options.

Opening Activity

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week's activity is a game designed to help the girls recognize their emotions. If the girls can identify what they are feeling and why, they can manage their emotions better. It also helps them determine what emotions are triggered by different situations.

Gather

- 4 large pieces of paper
- blue painter's tape or some other tape that won't leave residue on the walls

Go!

1. *Ahead of time:* On each of the four large pieces of paper, write these four emotions: happy, angry, sad, confused. In four different areas (preferably the four corners of the room), tape the pieces of paper to the wall.
2. *Ahead of time:* Have ready the following list of situations or create your own list:
 - Your four-year-old brother goes into your room and draws all over your walls with crayon.
 - You find out that your friend told a lie about you behind your back.
 - You get back a test that you felt confident about and find out that you actually failed.
 - You want to go to a friend's house, but your parents tell you that you have to go somewhere with them instead.
 - You find out that some of your friends did something with a group and did not invite you.
 - Someone in your gym class teases you about the way you play sports.
 - You fall down in front of a lot of people at church.
3. Ask the girls to come to the center of the room to start the game. Point out the four areas of the room with the four emotion signs.
4. Read one situation. Ask the girls how they would feel if that happened to them. Ask them to move toward the sign with the emotion that best matches the emotion they think they would feel.
5. Ask one girl from each corner represented to explain why she chose that emotion.

Discussion Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

The focus of this week's discussion is on how girls can manage their emotions so that they don't run into unnecessary conflict. Tell the girls that having intense emotions at this stage of life is normal but that there are steps they can take to help control these feelings.

1. How can your emotions get you into trouble?
2. Have you ever experienced a time when you did not understand why you were feeling a certain way?
3. What should you do when you have strong emotional reactions?
4. Why is it important to recognize and deal with your emotions? In other words, why is stuffing or ignoring your emotions unhealthy?
5. What is one thing you do to cheer yourself up when you are feeling down?

Prayer Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week the prayer time will focus on the promises of God. Before going into prayer requests, ask each girl to open her Bible and read one promise of God from the following list: Joshua 1:9; Matthew 5:4; Matthew 11:28-30; Matthew 10:29-31. Be sure to stress that God is always there for them no matter what they are feeling.

Optional: Allow time to manage the prayer-partner plan outlined in chapter 1.

List of Promises

- God Will Never Leave Me—“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9, ESV).
- God Comforts Me—“God blesses those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4, ESV).
- God Gives Me Rest—“[Jesus said,] “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light” (Matthew 11:28-30, NLT).
- God Relieves My Fears—“Not even a sparrow, worth less than a penny, can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. And the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to him than a whole flock of sparrows” (Matthew 10:29-31, NLT).

CHAPTER 8

When Mom and Dad Spells MAD

(How to Get Along with Parents)

Estimated time: 30–40 Minutes

Got A LOT of extra time? See the appendix for more activity options to do with Mom.

Opening Activity

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week's activity is a craft that the girls can give to their parent(s) as a gift. The girls will decorate a coffee-cup sleeve and write a thank-you note on it. The purpose of the craft is to remind the girls that even when they disagree with their parents, their parents still have their best interests at heart and love them.

Gather

- at least 1 new coffee-cup sleeve for each girl; get 2 if you have time for them to decorate 2
- scissors (one pair for each girl is optimal, but the girls can share if needed)
- 3 sheets of colored paper for each girl

- glue
- decorations: bows, ribbon, stamps, jewels
- markers

Go!

1. *Ahead of time:* If possible, review the complete instructions found in *Clubhouse* magazine: <http://www.clubhousemagazine.com/create/coffee-sleeve-card.aspx>.
2. The girls are to carefully pull apart each coffee sleeve at the glued end. Lay the sleeves flat on the table.
3. Using the sleeve as a template, cut the colored paper to fit over each “bend” in the sleeve.
4. Glue paper to sleeve.
5. Personalize with decorations and write a message to their parents.

Discussion Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week's discussion focuses on the girls' relationships with their parents. The goal of this time is to help the girls see why they get into conflicts with their parents and to help them learn how to appropriately handle disagreements.

1. What issues cause the most disagreements with your parents?
2. How do you react when your parents tell you that you can't do something?
3. Why do you think God tells you to obey your parents?
4. Why do you think your parents have rules for you?
5. What are some ways you can build trust with your parents?
6. Why are you grateful for your parents?

Prayer Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

For prayer this week, ask the girls to pray specifically for their relationships with their parents. Pray that the girls will see how much their parents love them and that their mom and dad really want the best for them.

Optional: Allow time to manage the prayer-partner plan outlined in chapter 1.

CHAPTER 9

Sailing on the SS Friendship

(How to Be a Good Friend)

Estimated time: 30–40 Minutes

Got extra time? See the appendix for more activity options.

Opening Activity

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week's craft is a friendship bracelet. Each girl will make two bracelets, one for herself and one to give away. The purpose of this activity is for the girls to reflect on the blessings of friendship in their lives.

Gather

- Bracelet-making kit that contains beads
- Index cards to write notes
- Pens and markers

Go!

1. Get a bracelet-making kit that has enough twine and beads for each girl in the group to make two bracelets.
2. Tell each girl to make one bracelet for herself and another one for a friend.
3. Ask each girl to write a thank-you-for-being-a-good-friend note.
4. Tell the girls to take the bracelets and the note home to give to their friend later.

Discussion Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week's discussion will focus on how to be a good friend and how to surround yourself with good friends. Stress how important it is to have good relationships and how those relationships can either help them become better people or bring them down.

- What makes a good friend?
- Why is it important to choose good friends?
- How do your friends make your life better?
- How do they keep friendships going?
- What makes Jesus the Best Friend you could ever have?

Prayer Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week the prayer time will focus on praying for friends. Ask the girls to thank God for their friends. Ask them to write down the name of a friend they would like to pray for in the next week. Emphasize the idea that God gave them friends for a reason and that they should never forget the importance of friendship.

Optional: Allow time to manage the prayer-partner plan outlined in chapter 1.

CHAPTER 10

Words Can Hurt You

(How to Make Your
Conversations Matter)

Estimated time: 30–40 Minutes

E Got extra time? See the appendix for more activity options.

Opening Activity

Time allotted: 10 Minutes

The purpose of this week's activity is to demonstrate how communication can be difficult and that sometimes people can misunderstand each other. Play the telephone game with the girls to humorously illustrate what happens when a message gets distorted.

Go!

1. Ask the girls to sit in a circle.
2. Start the game by whispering a message in the ear of the girl next to you on the right.
3. That girl whispers the message to the girl on her right. Each girl is allowed to hear the message only once, and then she must pass on what she thinks she heard.

4. After each round, ask the last girl to say out loud what she heard.
5. If possible, play enough rounds so that each girl has the chance to make up a message and pass it.

Discussion Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week's discussion will focus on the effect of words and the power of communication. Emphasize that the messages the girls send through their words and their actions are meaningful. The way they communicate can either give life or take it away.

- Why is what you say so important?
- How is gossip dangerous and damaging?
- What can you do to make sure your words don't hurt others?
- How can your attitude affect what you say?
- How can you be a good listener?

Prayer Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week there is an activity connected to prayer time. The girls will work together to make a praise banner thanking God for their blessings. The purpose is to remind the girls that God is the Person they most need to communicate with on a regular basis. He will never misunderstand them and always knows what the girls are truly feeling.

Gather

- A 5- to 8-foot piece of butcher paper
- pens and markers

Go!

1. *Do this in advance:* Write "Thank you God for . . ." in big letters across the butcher paper. Underneath that write the reference Psalm 139:4 (NIV): "Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD."
2. Pass out markers and pens. Spread out the paper and let the girls write or draw pictures about what they are thankful for on the banner.

Optional: Allow time to manage the prayer-partner plan outlined in chapter 1.

CHAPTER 11

Skip the Lip Gloss and Play Soccer

(Is Being Boy-Crazy Worth It?)

Estimated time: 30–40 Minutes

E Got extra time? See the appendix for more activity options.

Opening Activity

This week's activity is cookie decorating. The cookies are heart-shaped to remind the girls about the importance of following the wisdom of Proverbs 4:23 (NIV), "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Make the cookies beforehand and then let the girls decorate them at the meeting. For complete directions see *Clubhouse* magazine <http://www.clubhousemagazine.com/en/create/have-a-heart-cookie-pops.aspx>.

Gather

- dough to bake sugar cookies (premade sugar cookie dough or make the dough from scratch)
- heart-shaped cookie cutter
- wood craft sticks
- 1 or 2 cans white frosting (or make it at home)
- small candies and/or sprinkles

- small cellophane bags for each cookie or non-Ziploc plastic bags (the kind that close with a twist-tie)
- ribbon snippets about 8- to 10-inches long (curling ribbon or yarn is fine)

Go!

1. If possible, bake the cookies at the group gathering site. If that's not an option, bake the cookies at home.
Roll the cookie dough to at least ¼-inch thick.
2. Before baking, insert a wood craft stick at the vertex of each heart cookie to make a handle.
3. Bake according to the directions on the package or recipe.
4. Allow cookies to cool. Frost them with icing.
5. Decorate with candies and sprinkles.
6. Allow the icing to set a bit. Then wrap each cookie in a small plastic bag and tie with a ribbon.

Discussion Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

This week's discussion focuses on the topic of boys. Be sure to keep the discussion age-appropriate and stress that special relationships with boys should be reserved for the future. The purpose is to introduce the girls to an important topic without getting too detailed about the issue.

1. What are some qualities that you will look for in a husband someday?
2. Why is it important to talk to God about boys?
3. Name some guys in your life right now (friends, teachers, brothers, father). Do they model good character?
4. Why is thinking about boys too often harmful?
5. Why is the way God sees you more important than what boys think?

Prayer Time

Time allotted: 10 minutes

Prepare in advance: Cue up the song "How He Loves" by the David Crowder Band if you don't know it.

This week the girls will have the opportunity to reflect on God's perfect love, which is more than sufficient for them. Worship God in a group, and thank Him for His love by singing the song, "How He Loves." After singing the song, ask the girls what the song is saying about God's nature. Emphasize that God is the one who loves them more than anyone else ever could. Pray that the girls will fall in love with God and make Him the center of their lives. Pray that they will trust that God is in control of every aspect of their lives, including their interactions with boys.

Optional: Allow time to manage the prayer-partner plan outlined in chapter 1.

Appendix I

Chapter I: The Candy Jar

Allotted time: 5–10 minutes

This activity can be done at the beginning of the session or at the end based on time and leader preference. This is a get-to-know-you time when the girls can learn more about their leader and fellow students.

The questions should be fun and lighthearted in order to serve as an icebreaker to help the girls become comfortable in the group.

Gather

- jar or bowl
- wrapped candies--at least 6 different kinds
- list of questions
 - a. If you could have any superpower, what would you choose and why?
 - b. What animal reflects your personality the most?
 - c. If you could have any job, what would you choose and why?
 - d. If you could eat only one food for the rest of your life, what would you choose and why?
 - e. What one thing is the most essential for you to have on a long trip?
 - f. If you could hang out with Connie for a day, what would you do and why?

Go!

1. Fill up a jar or bowl with various wrapped candies that will correspond to different get-to-know-you questions (a, b, c, d, e, or f).
2. Ask each girl to close her eyes and select a candy from the container. The girl will then answer the question that corresponds to that candy.
3. Continue passing the bowl around until everyone, including the leader, has had a turn.

Chapter 2: The Beach Ball

Allotted time: 5–10 minutes

Gather

- beach ball
- Sharpie pen
- list of questions

Go!

1. Get an inflatable beach ball and write the following questions on the ball with a Sharpie. Be sure to write the questions with about 2 inches of space around each question on the ball.
2. Toss the ball to the first girl. Ask that girl to answer the question that is the closest to her right hand.
3. The first girl will then toss it to the next girl, and the game continues until everyone has answered a question:
 - a. What is your favorite chore to do at home?
 - b. What is one thing you do well?
 - c. In this group, what is one way you could help the leader?
 - d. Which Bible character reminds you of yourself? Why?
 - e. If you could teach any subject or elective, what would it be and why?
 - f. In personality, which Odyssey character are you the most like? In what ways?

Chapter 3: Mad Libs

Allotted time: 5–10 minutes

This Mad Libs-type game demonstrates how a story does not always go where a reader might expect. God ultimately writes each girl's story, and her life will be full of surprises.

Gather

- For each girl, print out a copy of the following story. But don't pass them out until instructed to do so.

Fill in the Story

Connie and Penny were going to _____ when
they found a _____ on the road. They decided
to check it out and discovered that the _____
had _____ all over it. They picked it up
and _____ to go show Whit what they had
found. When Whit examined it, he said it was
really a _____ that a _____ used. The three of
them decided to turn it in to the _____ station.
The people at the station thanked Whit,
Connie, and Penny and gave them a(n) _____
as a reward.

Go!

1. As a group, ask the girls to name the following types of words and write down their responses in order: place, noun, adjective, plural noun, verb, noun, occupation, place, noun.
2. Pass out the “Fill in the Story” sheets.
3. Read their responses again, in order, allowing the girls to fill in responses in the blanks.
4. Ask one of the girls to read the story out loud.

Chapter 4: Prayer Box

Allotted time: 5–10 minutes

In this activity each girl will make a prayer box. The prayer box is a repository for prayers for her life and the lives of others.

Gather

- Empty tissue box for each girl
- Colored construction paper
- Pens, markers, and colored pencils
- Scissors
- Transparent tape or glue
- Optional: stickers
- A list of verses about prayer. Here are some possibilities:
 - “When you pray, don’t keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Don’t be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (Matthew 6:7–8, NIV).
 - “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8, NIV).
 - “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him” (Matthew 7:11, NIV).
 - “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:13–14, NIV).
 - “Don’t be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6, NIV).
 - “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him” (1 John 5:14–15, NIV).

Go!

1. Allow each girl to pick a piece of colored construction paper. Ask them to cut and fit it around the outside of the empty tissue box.
2. Let each girl draw and write on the outside of the box. Have a list of verses about prayer so that the girls can write them on their box.
3. Encourage the girls to write prayer requests on slips of paper and keep them in the box.

Chapter 5: Honey Bits

Allotted time: 5–10 minutes

The purpose of this activity is to show one great way to eat right. This snack is easy to make, delicious, and nutritious. Do the prep work with the girls, but offer the finished product so that the girls can sample it. Let the girls help with each of the steps. Also print out the recipe for each girl to take home to try cooking it again for themselves. This recipe was found at *Clubhouse* magazine <http://www.clubhousemagazine.com/en/create/honey-coated-almonds.aspx>.

Gather

- 1/2 cup honey
- 1 tablespoon flaxseed meal
- Cinnamon
- Dry-roasted almonds
- Cooking spray
- Mixing bowl
- Wooden spoon
- Cooking measurement tools

Go!

1. Mix honey, flaxseed, and cinnamon in a bowl.
2. Add almonds and coat thoroughly with mixture.
(Do the next three steps at home before the meeting so you can serve the almonds to the girls at the meeting)
3. Grease baking sheet with cooking spray.
4. Spread almonds on pan and freeze.
5. Before serving, remove from freezer, and let thaw for a few minutes.

Chapter 6: Thrift Trip

Allotted time: 1 to 2 hours

This week's option is to take the girls on a field trip to a local thrift store. The purpose of this activity is to show the girls that they don't have to spend a lot of money or buy the latest styles in order to look good.

Gather

- Ask each girl to bring \$10 to \$15
- Find drivers to take the girls on a field trip
- Parents' permission for each girl to participate

Go!

1. Arrive at the thrift store and give the girls 20 to 25 minutes to put together an outfit. (Remind them about modesty and explain that they won't be allowed to purchase anything that is inappropriate.)
2. Once all the girls have purchased their outfit, let each girl present what they got to the group.
3. Encourage the girls that developing a unique style doesn't have to cost a lot. Affirm each girl's outfit and tell her what she wears does not define her, but rather that God's view of her should define her.

Chapter 7: Prayer Journal

Allotted time: 10 minutes

This week's craft is making a prayer journal. Explain that the girls can use it to write their prayers to God. They can tell God about what they are feeling and ask for His help.

Gather

- One simple journal for each girl
- Markers
- Stickers
- Age-appropriate magazines

Go!

1. Give each girl a simple, plain cover journal.

2. Let the girls decorate their journal with markers, stickers, and magazine clippings.
3. Instruct the girls to write their name on the inside cover and encourage them to write one or more of the Bible verses about the promises of God found in chapter 7.

Chapter 8: Mom's Event

Allotted time: 1 hour to several days

This week there is an option to have a mom-and-daughter event. It can either be added to the end of the week's meeting or be held at an entirely different time. The purpose of the event is to strengthen the girls' relationships with their mothers.

Gather

- note cards, paper, or white board
- markers or pens

Go!

1. Chose a theme for your event:
 - Have a tea party
 - Have a large potluck dinner
 - Have a spa day party
2. At the event
 - a. Play a "newlywed" type game with each mother/daughter pair.
 - b. Ask the daughters a series of questions about themselves and have them write down their answer on a note card or a piece of paper.
 - c. Have the mothers give the answer they think their daughter wrote. If the parent says what their daughter wrote, give the pair one point.
 - d. After about 5 questions, tally up the points and then have the mothers and daughters switch so that you are now asking the mothers the questions.
 - e. The pair with the most points wins!

Some sample questions are: *What is your favorite thing to do? Who is your best friend? What is one thing you could not live without? Where is your favorite place to go? Are you a morning person or a night owl? What kind of music do you like?*

3. Ask the mothers to bless their daughters.

Chapter 9: Role Playing

Allotted time: 15 minutes

This week there is a role-playing exercise designed to help the girls practice handling conflicts with their friends.

Go!

1. Split the girls into pairs to work out the different scenarios. Instruct the girls to switch off from being the friends in the scenario to being themselves in the scenario after each scenario.
2. Read each scenario and then give the girls about two minutes to role-play how they would handle it.
3. After completing four scenarios, get together and ask the girls about what they learned during the activity. Some questions are *What was the most difficult part of the scenarios for you? Why do you think we did this activity? What will you do in the future differently when dealing with problems with friends?*

The Scenarios

#1 You find out that one of your friends is angry with you because you didn't invite her to a sleepover you had last weekend with a different friend. However your friend does not know that this friend is about to move away and this was one of the last times for just the two of you to hang out. You decide to talk to your friend and apologize for the misunderstanding. What do you say?

#2 One of your friends is being teased a lot at school by some of the other kids because she has a stutter. You want to comfort your friend and help her gain confidence. What do you say?

#3 You and your friend disagree about what to do for a class project. She wants to do something very creative and different. You want to do something for an easy A. How do you work through this conflict with your friend?

#4 You joined a club with your friend so you could have a new activity to do together. However, once you have been in the club for a while, you realize it is not something you are really interested in, so you want to quit. Your friend loves the club and thinks you do too. You decide you have to leave the club to do something else you really do enjoy. What do you say?

Chapter 10: Charades

Allotted time: 10 Minutes

This week there is an option to play charades at the end of the meeting. This game illustrates the truth of one of the statistics in chapter 10 that 90 percent of communication is nonverbal.

Go!

1. Whisper to the girl who is acting a word or phrase to act out.
2. Ask the girl do her best to act it out without using any noises or mouthing any words.
3. Give the rest of the girls 1 minute to guess the word or phrase. If someone guesses correctly, she will go next. If no one guesses correctly, pick someone to go next.
4. After everyone has had a turn, discuss why the game is challenging. Ask the girls why communicating without words can be difficult. Also ask them why it is so easy to misunderstand someone when he/she doesn't say exactly what he/she means.

Chapter II: Dad's Day

Allotted time: 40–60 minutes

This week there is an optional father/daughter event that can either be added to the end of the meeting or held at a separate time. The purpose of this event is to help build healthy, strong relationships between the fathers and their daughters. A girl's relationship with her father is a key component of how she will view and interact with boys in the future.

Gather

- note cards, paper, or white board
- markers or pens

Go!

1. Select a theme for the event.
 - An active outing like mini-golf, go-karting, laser tag, or a visit to a trampoline center
 - A barbeque or a large meal
 - A field trip to a museum, movie, or park.
2. At or after the event do a simple exercise to show the different expectations a girl and her father have for her future husband.
 - a. Give the girls a blank sheet of paper and give them three minutes them to write the qualities they would want in a future husband.
 - b. Flip over the paper and give the dads three minutes to write down the qualities they want in their daughter's future husband.
 - c. Have all the pairs look at the list together and discuss the similarities and differences of their two lists.
 - d. Ask the fathers bless to their daughter(s).